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SPEECH

OF

ROBERT J. BRECKINRIDGE,

DELIVERED

IN THE COURT-HOUSE YARD AT LEXINGTON, KY.

On the 12th day of October, 1840,

IN REPLY

TO THE

SPEECH OF ROBERT WICKLIFFE, DELIVERED IN THE COURT-HOUSE  
IN LEXINGTON, ON THE 10TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1840, UPON

THE OCCASION OF RESIGNING HIS SEAT AS SENATOR  
FROM THE COUNTY OF FAYETTE;"

AND IN DEFENCE

Of his personal character, his political principles and his  
religious connexions.

MORE PARTICULARLY

IN REGARD TO THE QUESTIONS OF THE POWER OF THE LEGISLATURE ON THE  
SUBJECT OF SLAVERY, OF THE IMPORTATION OF SLAVES, OF ABOLITIONISM,  
OF BRITISH INFLUENCE, OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, ETC.

LEXINGTON, KY.

N. L. & J. W. FINNELL, Printers—Intelligencer Office.

1840.



From the Observer & Reporter, of October 7, 1840.

#### TO THE FREEMEN OF THE COUNTY OF FAYETTE.

MY RESPECTED COUNTRYMEN—Being called, in the providence of God, to visit this my native region, to which I have been for nine years almost a stranger, I have been greatly grieved and astonished to find in wide circulation, the most gross and calumnious attacks upon me by name; and in connexion with my name upon systems of opinion, both political and religious, with which I have been more or less connected; and even upon that branch of the Church of God, in which it is my lot to be a minister. I allude, as you cannot doubt, to the speech of ROBERT WICKLIFFE, Sen., made on the occasion of the defeat of his son in the late general election, and his own consequent resignation of his seat in the State Senate, and more recently printed in pamphlet form.

It is more than ten years since I had the least connexion with political life; and nearly as long since I had any personal intercourse with Mr. Wickliffe. The passions of men, especially of old men, ought to cool, and party bitterness to cease, after so long an interval. It cannot assuage the mortification of defeat, to traduce the dead, the absent, and those who no longer contend. I appear to myself to have a right to speak thus, if for no other reason, at least for this—that when, ten years ago, Mr. Wickliffe, as he still boasts, placed me in circumstances somewhat similar to those in which others have now placed his son, I submitted with composure, and without reproach, insult and slander, to the trials which he now finds it so hard to endure. The dealings of Providence are full of a sure and sacred retribution.

It is therefore, in no spirit of personal animosity, that, after mature deliberation, extensive conference with my friends, and humble seeking of guidance from above, I have determined to defend myself, my principles, and the great interests involved in the accusations of Mr. Wickliffe; and to repel, in the very spot where they were made, charges and insinuations against myself, my friends and my church, which are equally false, malicious and injurious. I therefore desire to meet the freemen of Fayette county, my old friends and former constituents, at the Court-House, on Monday next, the 12th instant, at which time, if God permits, it is my purpose to reply to so much of Mr. Wickliffe's speech, as it may then appear my duty to notice. With great respect,

ROBERT J. BRECKINRIDGE.

P. S. The Intelligencer and Gazette will confer a favor by publishing this communication.

From the Observer & Reporter, of October 10th, 1840.

#### TO THE FREEMEN OF THE COUNTY OF FAYETTE.

The Rev. ROBERT J. BRECKINRIDGE has addressed a note to you, that he, being called in the providence of God to visit his native land, is actually and in very deed *here*; and that after extensive conference with friends, and *humble seeking of guidance from above*, he has come to the conclusion, *in no personal animosity*, to defend himself, his friends, and his church against my charges and insinuations against them, which are equally false, malicious and injurious. Whether the gentleman has sought counsel from above or below, to assist him in concocting this specimen of tirade and vulgarism, I shall not descend to enquire. But notwithstanding the reverend gentleman strongly intimates that he is advised from above to make the threatened attack, be assured, fellow-citizens, that I will meet him on the spot where he makes it, not to hurl back upon him his gross, vulgar abuse, but to satisfy both you and him, that his visions from above, of which he speaks, are from another quarter.

I trust, therefore, that you, my neighbors and fellow-countrymen, will on that day also hear me; and if consequences which none can foretell, shall follow the reverend gentleman's renewed war upon me, in relation to the slaves of the country, *in proper person*, you will bear in mind that he again begins it. I beg all to read what I have said. I beg you all to remember the manner in which I introduced the gentleman's name, and whether one word of abuse or reproach was or is uttered. I simply read his publications from the newspapers, as I did those of Mr. Green, to show their doctrines on slavery and to connect the Negro Law with their plans for the ultimate emancipation of our slaves; and to prove my reluctance to even discuss the slave question, before slaves and slave-holders, stated that I would not reply to either Mr. Green or Mr. Breckinridge, until Mr. Breckinridge forced me to do it, by assailing me in speeches throughout the county. These were, and are facts to which hundreds, and I might say thousands could have testified; and which the reverend gentleman knows well and dare not deny. And yet, he pretends he has been brought here by the providence of God, to repel unfounded slanders; and that his slanderous publication against me shall go uncontradicted, he makes a pretext of calling you together, to insinuate his poison into all the presses of the city, that the mails may carry it, without its antidote, to persons and places where I am unknown.

No, fellow-citizens, this cloak, which the gentleman wears, is not large enough to cover itself. Talk, as he may, of his being here by the providence of God and his seeking advice from above, he has come here for the very business he is enacting. He learnt that his Negro Bill had driven me from the Senate; that a new election is pending, and lo! he is here as quick as the stages will bring him, and commences a war upon me—all by the advice and providence of God, of course!

But oh, *his church*, *his church* is slandered, and he will, in the providence of God, defend her. Here is the cloven-foot of the whole business. The gentleman reached this place, expecting to see me prostrated and consuming in an atmosphere in which only a church and political salamander could do battle with effect. He finds things all tranquil, and that I have still friends and many too among Presbyterians; and to raise the whole power of that Church, to summon its thousands into the field, he becomes a second Peter the Hermit, urging on followers of the Cross, not to seize the Holy Land and the sepulchre of the Lord, but to crush a powerless individual *whose very existence his malignity cannot endure*. Many Presbyterians were present, and among them several Divines of that persuasion, none of whom excepted to one word I uttered, that I have ever heard of. And who am I, and what Church is it that the gentleman promises to rescue from my slanders? Have ever I been the enemy of Presbyterians, or Presbyterians (the gentleman always excepted) my enemies? It is the church of every human creature connected with me in blood in the State, who are professing Christians, even in my own household. Although a member of a different Church myself, I have ever sustained to that Church and many of its eminent and pious Clergy the best relations; and have, in the support I give religion, always placed it upon the same footing, in my contributions, with my own Church. Is it likely then that I should insinuate, much less say aught against that Church? Certainly not, and if a word or sentence fell from me, inadvertently, that would seem to indicate a want of respect for it, none would be more deeply afflicted for it than myself.



Since the malignant appeal made by the gentleman, I have carefully reflected on my speech as delivered, and my written speech; and I am unable to perceive any thing out of which malignity itself can torture an attack on the Presbyterians; and I shall be greatly deceived if the gentleman is able to turn the Presbyterians or the freemen of the county of Fayette upon me, either for any thing uttered in that speech or for any other act of my life. If he ever does, it will not be by his humble seeking of guidance from above, but thro' malign seeking and guidance from below. How terrible is this man of God, who is here by his providence, and who, under his guidance, announces his determination to annihilate me! Yet, my countrymen, I quail not. How impious is this *mere man*, this *mere being*, to announce to you that he is here by the providence of God, and moved by his guidance in the war he wages upon me. What Christian, that feels the goodness and greatness of God, can read the boasting of this clerical chevalier, without shuddering at the impiety of the *crusader*. The gentleman who now announces himself, is not *he* who was once seen in places in Lexington and Frankfort where others sometimes are now seen. No. He comes bearing to you the counsels of God—a vicegerent from Heaven, charged with my utter ruin and desolation. But this boaster, fellow-citizens, will find, on Monday next, that *he is a mere man*, and among the same people he left in 1830—that he is just *Robert J. Breckinridge*, not much better than he used to be, and not a whit better than he should be, or I am much deceived.

ROBERT WICKLIFFE.

The papers that published Mr. Breckinridge's address, are respectfully requested to copy this.

## SPEECH, &c.

It is impossible, my countrymen, friends, and old constituents, that you can be more surprised than I am, at finding myself again in the midst of political agitations; again compelled to appear at the bar of the people. Ten years of absolute withdrawal from all political strife—even from the exercise of the right of suffrage; ten years of ardent and incessant devotion to other and very different pursuits; ten years of absence from this beautiful region, my native and too-well beloved country—have rendered me as unqualified, as I am painfully averse, to the high duties of this occasion.

And yet, there is no spot so fit as this; no subject on which I am more willing to be tried; no man so appropriate as he who accuses me. Here I drew my first breath and lived in your midst for the first thirty years of my life; and amidst this vast assembly of freemen, there is not one who is not familiar with my life and character. Here you have tried, trusted and honored me; here I have rendered back those trusts and accounted for the exercise of those powers again and again confided to me. And it is most meet that on this very spot, thus precious to me, I should repel the accusations which have been here made against me, against my honored friends, not excepting even the dead; against my political life and religious principles; yea, even against the church of the living God. Accusations most fit to be brought by the only personal or political enemy in all the West, nay, in all the world, whose hate and bitterness have lived unbroken through ten years of separation from me; accusations, which I will prove not only to be utterly without truth, in the sense intended by him who makes them, but far truer, in every evil sense, of him, than of me; or failing to do so, I will agree that you may execrate me as much as I now think every upright man should condemn him.

There arose about ten years ago, two causes of open quarrel between myself and ROBERT WICKLIFFE, Sen.; the one purely personal, the other political. In regard to the former, I will say but a word. Mr. Wickliffe was the retained attorney of the administrators of my late honored father, and subsequently of the trustee of that estate, my late brother, Joseph Cabell Breckinridge. For a long course of years ending about 1824, I had nothing to do with any of those transactions; but about that time becoming trustee myself, I had much intercourse with Mr. W. in the relations stated above, till about the year 1830 or '31, when my duty as trustee for others, obliged me in my opinion, to come to an open rupture with him. Of the nature and results of that unreconciled difficulty, I will add only two remarks: The *first* is, that there exists a written correspondence between him and myself in



regard to it, which he has often spoken of publishing, and which I hereby challenge him to lay before the public, if he has the firmness to do so. The *second* is, that the whole subject is matter of general notoriety to the elder members of the Lexington Bar, and to them I refer all who desire to be informed in regard to it. My only reason for mentioning the matter at present, is to show our whole relations, and put an end to false and secret whisperings, industriously circulated in my absence.

My political difficulties with Mr. Wickliffe were all public. I was elected to the Legislature of the State from this county, and that in a manner most honorable to any man, and especially to a very young man—four times in succession, viz: in the month of August, 1825, '6, '7 and '8. After the session of 1826, I published a circular to the voters of the county, which you will find in the newspapers of the day, and declined being a candidate again. But I was forced by the urgency of my friends upon the canvass; and was, as I have said, again elected one of your representatives in 1827 and 1828. In 1829 I again declined public life; and by reason of the feebleness of my health, was allowed to remain in private life. But in 1830, was again brought before the public as a candidate for a seat in the House of Representatives. During the winter of 1829-'30, while I was not in the public service, Mr. Wickliffe, who was then Senator from Fayette, caused a bill of a most important character to be passed through the Legislature, altering the whole system of the county in regard to the public high-ways. When I became a candidate in 1830, there were three subjects of particular interest which agitated the public mind, viz: 1st, This Road Bill: 2d, the Sabbath mail question, as it was called: 3d, one aspect of the question regarding the black race. I will briefly explain the posture of the two first questions, and then more fully enter upon the third, which more immediately demands our present consideration.

The Constitution of Kentucky seemed to me to interpose two insuperable barriers in the way of Mr. Wickliffe's famous road bill: 1st, As it had required all laws to be *general and uniform*, whereas this was part of a system which made a separate province of every county in the commonwealth; and 2d, as it had vested expressly in the county courts the very powers—and they were enormous—conferred by this bill, on certain elective officers. It also appeared to me, that sound policy and a just regard to the rights, especially of small proprietors, required the rejection of the bill. And as you all remember it was rejected by as decided an expression of public sentiment as was ever made in the county—less than one hundred, I believe less than fifty votes having been cast for it, in a constituency approaching three thousand. It does not perhaps become me to say, that this extraordinary fate of a very favorite measure, did not tend to mollify a temper always arrogant; nor that the evident effects of the proposed act, upon the vast landed and slave property of its author, may not have aided his other purposes in impelling him, while still a Senator, to enter the canvass publicly against me; nor do I care to examine too minutely his allegations, then urged to justify his attacks, and now repeated, to explain them, that too little reverence was shown by me and the county, for his la-

bors and opinions. Much allowance is to be made for human weakness; and I have observed that men of a certain class, are unable to comprehend how it is that riches, after they obtain them, do not command from others that awful reverence, which they extended to them, when themselves were poor.

The question of the Sunday mail, was the second of those agitated in 1830. It had no conceivable relation to the county canvass; the laws of Kentucky were adequate and were not objected to, in regard to the general subject of the Sabbath; and the particular object was one altogether of general politics. Mr. Wickliffe's present opinions, judging from the speech which has required this notice at my hands, are most decided against all '*inquisitors*,' and even all '*inquisition*,' as he is pleased to speak—into the sentiments of young gentlemen aspiring to office; even when the particular subject is of direct and pressing urgency. He thought differently in 1830; and so did I. It was alike to me, whether the questions put were meant for good or ill, were put by friends or opponents. I tried to think aright, and was ever ready to think aloud. Called to avow my sentiments, I stated frankly that I believed the Sabbath day to be of divine and perpetual obligation; that as one of the people, I was desirous that every public servant of every grade should have liberty to rest on that day; and that as a public man, I should always recognise the paramount obligation of the law of God. You remember the cry of Church and State; you remember the accusations against the Presbyterian Church, now renewed in another form by this gentleman; you remember the clamor of infidels, the prejudices of the men of the world, the opposition of a large body of christians even, who deny that the Sabbath has any obligation for us. I leave to Mr. Wickliffe the task of explaining the origin and object of that '*inquisition*'—and regret that he is so little able to bear injuries, which he is so great a master in inflicting. For my own part, I am obliged to say, that I look back with entire satisfaction upon my course and principles in regard to this subject, and am but the more confirmed by subsequent experience and reflection, that nothing can justify any species of concealment in a public man, and nothing compensate a people for a plain violation of the laws of God.

I come now to the third and most important question. In 1830, as in 1840, Mr. Wickliffe charges upon his opponents the sin of agitating the question of negro slavery. But how stand the facts? At the present moment, does not the agitation arise from an attempt on his part to force the repeal of an existing law? Is there any attempt in any quarter to take any step in advance? On the contrary, is not the whole effort of his opponents directed to the single point of maintaining the settled policy of the State since 1798; while it is he, who is striving to make a retrograde movement by the repeal of the act of 1833? So it was precisely in 1830. He commenced the agitation in 1830, by the publication of a violent circular to his constituents, in reply to which the numbers on which he has arraigned me, and after which the essays on which he has attacked the late Judge GREEN, of Lincoln, were all written. If there be evil in such agitations, he chiefly, if not alone, is really responsible. But in point of fact there have always been diversities of opinion on the whole subject of negro slavery, in this com-



monwealth. They existed in 1793, they existed in 1798, they have existed ever since, and they still exist in all their force. Nay, new opinions, making the whole subject more and more complex, have sprung up of late years on opposite extremes of the question, some of which this gentleman has himself most ardently embraced. The dogmas of the Abolitionists, which he now charges me with propagating, bad as they are, are not more novel in the West, than those of Mr. Calhoun and his heated and clumsy disciple now under consideration. In 1798 slavery was engrafted on the present constitution by no great majority, and after a most violent conflict. The event which perhaps decided the destinies of Kentucky at that era, was the Bryant Station Convention; which, it is notorious, was not committed to Mr. Wickliffe's present theory of the abstract excellence of slavery and his present plans for its eternal duration in this commonwealth. George Nicholas, of whom he speaks so much, was a wise and patriotic man; but there is no proof that he held the opinions attributed to him by Mr. Wickliffe; and if there were such proof, it is notorious that he was not placed on the Bryant Station ticket, and that he was not a member of the Convention of 1798. John Breckinridge was the leader of the Bryant Station ticket; he was the drafter of the present constitution; and in connexion with Caleb Wallace, framed the important article on the subject of slavery; an article, which contains no extreme opinion, but is full of wisdom, humanity and political forecast; an article which I have always cordially approved, and done my best to prevent its alteration; and which, singly and by itself, would have conferred on its author the character of a profound and patriotic statesman. For my own part, it is perfectly well known, that I adhered to that party in Kentucky politics which opposed all change in the government; which believed the powers conferred by the existing constitution to be perfectly ample for every purpose of good; and which, with unbroken constancy, has maintained its position amid all the changes of opinion of the last half century, in defiance of the opposite and equally false accusations, made by ignorant and malevolent men, sometimes of advocating modern abolitionism and sometimes of favoring eternal slavery.

Under the existing constitution, this party of which I have just spoken, has supposed that slavery might be terminated in perfect accordance with its spirit and provisions, in various modes. Two modes are expressly recognized on the face of the instrument, viz: 1st, By the consent of the owners, and 2d, by payment on the part of the State. It is manifest that, by a system of moderate and sustained regulations, the same end might be ultimately accomplished, without infringing the title of the owner more than has been done by multitudes of laws from the foundation of the government. It is also obvious, that the question of the importation of slaves into the State, is a most important one in relation to the whole subject; for while those who even desire to see slavery made eternal, as Mr. Wickliffe now does, might wisely intend at the same time to keep it within manageable bounds; those who desired that it should not be eternal, would also naturally wish to keep it in a like condition: and the most dreadful of all abolitionists may justly be considered those who should endeavor to overwhelm the country

and the whites, by a horrible and irresistible merchandise in which our liberties and lives might be bartered off for slaves. It is equally clear that the question of the *post nati* is one of the first importance, in regard to the whole subject, whether physically or politically considered; and that if decided in a certain way, it would afford a method, at once sure and safe, to make the most just and gradual solution of the case. It is these two questions, of slave importation and the *post nati*, which more particularly occasioned the agitations of 1830 and 1840; the latter bringing down the wrath of Mr. Wickliffe upon me at that time, and both stirring up his present fury.

My essays in 1830, were written, as I have said, in reply to an official circular of Mr. Wickliffe's; I have also mentioned the series by John Green—and there was a third series about the same period, written by that learned and virtuous man, George Clark. His articles were numerous and were signed C.; those of Judge Green extended only to four or five numbers, and were signed *Philo C.*; my own were seven in number, and were signed B. Mr. Wickliffe appears to have quoted indiscriminately from all these, and attributed to me, all the matter out of them all, on which he could lay his hands, that seemed likely to serve his turn. Of the seven numbers which I wrote, the three first were devoted to a review of so much of Mr. Wickliffe's circular as related to the subject of slavery; the two next, to a discussion of the power of the Legislature over the unborn issue of female slaves; and the two last, to an attempt to prove that a prudent system of emancipation did not necessarily involve as a consequence, a permanent and considerable free black population. These essays have been very carefully examined by me, within a few days; and I must say, that their principles, temper and aim so commend themselves to my mind, that I should cordially rejoice to see a copy of them placed in the hands of every voter in the commonwealth. The constitutional argument, which seems to have given my accuser most uneasiness, neither he nor his friends have even attempted to meet, and I humbly conceive they cannot meet it; and yet it is so clear and simple, and whether good or bad, is so plain, that it is difficult to believe the abusive misrepresentations of it to be sincere. The point of it is this: The constitution comprehends under the single word '*slaves*,' the total interest of the owner protected by it; and allows his total interest, whatever it may be, to be purchased and paid for by the State. Now, if the possibility that a female will have children, is such an interest that it vests in the master, then it is such an interest, as by the force of the terms the State can pay for and control. If it is not such an interest, then there is no question the State can control it without pay. So that either way, the power of the State over the *post nati* is complete; according to one construction with pay, to the other without it. Let it, however, be borne in mind, that I am not now proving my opinions to be correct, so much as proving what they really were; for the adversary with whom I deal, does not attempt to disprove them, but with characteristic cunning, first misrepresents them, and then traduces their author. Before closing this statement, I will read two short extracts from these essays; the first from the first number, and the second constituting the closing paragraph of the series. The first of these will clearly show,



contrary to his repeated assertions, that those essays were written in no spirit of unkindness to him—indeed, before any difficulty existed between us, and while we were on terms of friendship; the second will show how faithfully I have now described their general character and object:

"The paper from which the foregoing analysis is taken, is addressed 'to the freemen of the county of Fayette,' and published in the Reporter of February 11th, signed R. Wickliffe. It has been my object to give a fair, indeed an ample abstract of the argument, and that, as far as my limits would permit, in the words of the author. I think he will not complain of injustice on that score; or if any has been inadvertently done him, he has some reason to know that there are very few persons who would deal with his errors more lightly, or receive the truths he would utter, with the increased favor derived from high personal consideration, more readily than myself." *Extract from No. 1 of Hints on Slavery—Kentucky Reporter, April 21, 1830.*

"I have endeavored to look at this subject merely as a political speculation, relinquishing every advantage which might have been derived from other and most cogent aspects. If those who agree with me, think that in doing this I have failed of doing justice to our cause, I appeal to their candor when I say, that if failing in every point, I shall have pointed the way in which some abler hand may vindicate the constitutional power for which I contend, I shall have achieved more for this cause, which I contend is that of my country's glory, than many who have preceded me. To those who differ from me, on the other hand, I have given the best pledge of the depth of my convictions of our common interest and duty, by presenting such views only as they will admit are legitimate, and canvassing the matter in that aspect only, on which they have been taught to repose as impregnable." *Extract from No. 7, of Hints on Slavery—Kentucky Reporter, April 21st, 1830.*

Upon the case as now set forth, I was a candidate in 1830, and my present accuser, as he now boasts, met and triumphed over me; or as he sometimes states, was himself arraigned and acquitted. His acquittal may be questioned, as he presented no personal issue, but held on to office, while I ran fairly before the people. His triumph seems still more doubtful, if the fate of his road bill be duly considered. The result of the canvass of 1830, seems least of all to afford him any just ground of self-congratulation, especially as expounded by that of 1840, whether we consider the principles involved, or the personal results. It is true, I did not succeed; but it is also true, I failed in a manner which I trust is characteristically different from that of the gentleman; and I must confess I take an honest pride in comparing my address declining the canvass in 1830, with his atrocious manifesto resigning his seat in 1840.\* The gentleman complains wofully, of what he classi-

\*From the Kentucky Reporter, of August 4, 1830.

#### TO THE VOTERS OF FAYETTE COUNTY.

It is now clear that if I can be elected at all, it must be by the votes of those who would prefer being represented by other men. Such a result, even if it could occur, would leave me no other alternative than to resign a seat to which I had been called by the reluctant suffrages of my fellow-citizens. There is but one open and manly way of avoiding so painful an occurrence.

I consider my political career among you at an end. Persons of other views and principles may stoop to conciliate their enemies by means that are revolting to me, or to bow down before your excited prejudices in a manner that I will not submit to. If my principles have overthrown me, I count it no shame to suffer in such a cause. They are true and necessary to your existence as a free people,

cally calls "the game of the three pluck one," played against his son in 1840. But he should not allow himself to forget, that in 1830 the game set on foot against me, was a game of seven pluck one; and that the kind of sport which offends him so dreadfully now, did then so delectably amuse him, that he struck in himself; a hearty volunteer; being the eighth, but of the seven, as the Scripture hath it. Nor should it grieve him to recall that in those days gentlemen could differ in Kentucky without flying at each other's throats. I remember on that canvass of 1830, not counting the gentleman himself, who might gain and could not lose, nor another gentleman who declined a poll early in the canvass—there were my friend Mr. Waller Bullock, my neighbor Major Matthews Flournoy, and Mr. Nathan Payne, on one general side of politics, according to old party lines; and on the other, my friends Major Wilson, Dr. Innes, and Mr. John Curd, besides Mr. Bledsoe, of the upper end of the county; and as far as I ever knew, my relations with these gentlemen remained unaltered. The case of Mr. Curd is somewhat remarkable, as he was successful both in 1830 and in 1840, once by and once against the efforts of Mr. Wickliffe. And as an eminent proof of what I assert, I may mention what is known to the whole county, that that lamented and true-hearted gentleman, Charlton Hunt, late Mayor of your city, and myself, were twice if not three times opposing candidates, whilst we were not only confidential friends, but partners in the practice of the law. But now it seems times are greatly changed, and to oppose Mr. Wickliffe is so mortal an offence, as to be past forgiveness; indeed, incapable of being committed by any but the worst of offenders. This speech of his avows or contemplates throughout, two great and undeniable truths: 1st. That every man who opposes him, no matter at what time or for what reason, is in fact an Abolitionist at heart; and 2d, that all such ought to be put down by violence! The first is the common sentiment of the speech; the latter he insinuates everywhere, and towards its close avows. For, says he, after traducing through many pages some of the best men whom this land, fruitful in virtue, has produced; and after characterising

and if God be not provoked to leave you to the government of your own blinded passions, they will surely prevail.

Between me and the county at large there remain no accounts to settle. They have heretofore lent me their support in a manner most grateful to my feelings, and I have repaid it by serving them faithfully if not wisely. If I have erred, I have been chastised. May you not find in the end that you have paid for the lesson more than it was worth.

From those who have sought by every means to injure me, I seek no redress. Their day of accounting will come by and bye. And when it does come, they may take my experience as conclusive of the truth, that the strong conviction of suffering wrongfully in a sacred cause, can alone enable us to bear with composure the desertion of our friends, the traduction of our good name, and the overthrow of cherished hopes of doing good.

I entered into no private arrangements with any body when I became a candidate. I have entered into none preparatory to declining the canvass. I thought the county desired my services, and they were offered to them. I now think they do not, and that offer is withdrawn. I am under no obligations to any public man; nor has any of them presumed to interfere with my private determinations. You have my most anxious wishes for your prosperity.

RO. J. BRECKINRIDGE.

August 3, 1830.



principles, old as the country and precious as its liberties—"I therefore forwarn you, as you value your property, your domestic peace and your country's peace, to CRUSH, while you have the power, the monster in its embryo." And lest this were not plain enough he adds, "Wherever you see a man stirring up the spirit of emancipation in the country, treat him as if he is an enemy to the country, as dangerous to your peace and the safety of your families." (Speech, p. 35.) Now, remembering that, in the estimation of Mr. Wickliffe, it is abolitionism to argue for a naked power in the government even over the unborn, and still more dreadful abolitionism to refuse to repeal laws which obstruct the importation of slaves—it is very clear what such passages mean. Men are crushed by violence; public enemies are shot down; private ones sometimes assassinated. Mr. Wickliffe is a man advanced in life; he is a lawyer, and he has a very large stake in the country; he is, moreover, a father and a grand-father. He has despised all these relations and ties to utter these and similar intemperate and wicked sentiments; sentiments alike derogatory to him as a magistrate, a citizen, and a patriot. In obedience to such sentiments, printed in his speech, insinuated in his card in answer to my call of this meeting, and repeated, as I learn, in a speech at Chilesburg on the day before yesterday, personal violence has been threatened, and men have come to this meeting armed, to prevent my delivering this address. My friends, I denounce in the name of liberty and of the laws, such horrible sentiments; I denounce the man who dares to utter them. I tell him, and I tell all, we are still free; we were so born—so will we die. Our fathers have purchased for us with their blood, this land which we possess; with our blood will we defend it and our rights together. The spirit of lawless violence is abhorrent to the State, to its character, to its people. They are madmen who shall first attempt to practice it; and whoever may be the last victims, such can hardly fail to be the first.

Before leaving the subject of these essays of 1830, I will read a few extracts from the speech of Mr. Wickliffe, by which it will be seen he has not only most needlessly dragged back these by-gone events upon the public stage, but that he has most unfairly misstated my opinions, as the ground-work of those accusations, which I am here to repel.

He says on page 3 of his speech, "all I ask of you is to bear in mind that I have not raised the controversy concerning our slave property either now or heretofore." I have proved that the facts are just the reverse in both cases.

Again, on the same page, "As to one of these charges, that of checking the emancipators in their efforts to free our slaves, it is just ten years since I was put on my trial for the same offence, by the late Honorable John Green and the now Reverend Robert J. Breckinridge," &c. I have already shown, that he was put on no trial, that he held on to office, that he commenced the discussion, and that no attempt was made by me to "free our slaves."

On page 4, "they not only poured in upon my devoted head their talented effusions through the papers of Lexington, but throughout the State, every paper in the service of the conspiracy formed against slaveholders were brought to bear upon me. One of the most talented and popular of the clique, the now reverend gentleman just mentioned,

after discharging his numbers through the Reporter and Commonwealth, took the field against me." The conspiracy was a reply to Mr. Wickliffe's circular; its object was a better understanding of our existing constitution; its mode of action was calm and temperate argument; and my taking the field against him, was his volunteering in the canvass to make stump speeches against me, without having the manliness to resign his own office.

Again on page 17-18, after one of his numerous philippics against his friend, John Green—a friend whose greatest weakness was that he trusted this man—a friend whom his great personal regard would not permit him to answer till death had sealed his eloquent lips and the sod covered the great and manly heart—of that upright and able man, he thus discourses concerning the absent preacher, whom he couples in his courageous denunciations with a dead Judge: "His friend and co-worker in abolishing negro slavery, Mr. Breckinridge, resumed the subject before his becoming a candidate to represent you in the General Assembly. That gentleman, after severely criticising my address on the movements of abolition, to my constituents, lays down two propositions as undeniable. The first is, that God has created all men free and equal, and no power on earth can make an unborn child a slave; hence that all negro children are by the laws of God and nature, born free. The second is, the constitution of Kentucky does not apply to any but slaves existing at its date, and therefore masters have no authority derivable from the constitution over slaves born since the constitution was made. This is, to be sure, doing what that gentleman declared he intended to do, striking at the root of the evil. He boldly denies the power of the State to make the child of a slave, a slave for life, but admits that the Legislature has the same power to make them servants for years, that it has to make the children of white women servants for years. He therefore recommends that this State at once adopt what is now the English plan for Jamaica, that is the *apprentice* system, and thus put an end to slavery. These frightful doctrines were not only published in the prints of the day, as you see, but maintained with all the power of eloquence and feeling, by that justly celebrated orator upon the rostrum throughout the canvass. \* \* \* I was heard—and feeble as I was when encountered by the great champion of abolition and universal emancipation, your votes sustained me."

I feel greatly at a loss, my respected countrymen, how to treat these remarkable statements. Mr. Wickliffe is a man somewhat in years, and I am by profession and by principle a man of peace; it becomes us both, therefore, as we are not responsible in any personal manner for the fairness of our statements, to make them with a most scrupulous exactness. There is indeed a kind of modern *benefit of Clergy*, which is as opposite as possible from what passed once under that phrase; for its present signification seems to be, the falsehood and abuse which every base braggart in the land, and every vile calumniator, may heap with impunity upon men who will not chastise them; and those hearts in which malignity and cowardice dwell together, may find thus a kind of vicarious relief. I have had my share of this *modern benefit of Clergy*; and well know how to value and how to endure it. But in sober seriousness, does Mr. Wickliffe really believe these



statements? Does he really believe he was a candidate for any office or got your votes in 1830? Is it possible to suppose he believed his own words, when he said, I had advised you from the rostrum to establish the Jamaica system of apprenticeship; that I had pressed on you the immediate adoption of this system in 1830; that I had denied before you all power in the State to hold slaves for life; that I had put the power over whites and blacks under the constitution on the same footing; or that I had taught that the constitution applied only to slaves in existence at its date? Is it possible for human credulity to go so far, as that he could have believed himself when he uttered these several propositions—each and every one of which is not only false—but all the people in Fayette county have personal and perfect knowledge that they are so; which are not only not contained in any writing of mine, but which are each and all, utterly at war with the whole tenor of my publications for more than twenty years? Luckily for me, it is not difficult to show in the most precise terms, what were my opinions in 1830; and I submit to you, without comment, and in contrast with the opinions attributed to me, the summary which closes the constitutional argument, in the numbers so often alluded to. It is taken from the end of the 5th No. of *Hints on Slavery—Kentucky Reporter*, May 19:

“I cannot doubt, then, that I am authorised to give the following interpretation to the debated clause of the constitution, as embracing its plain meaning and fulfilling its intents:

1. The General Assembly of Kentucky can never emancipate any slaves gradually, contingently, or in any case whatever; except, first, with the owner's consent, or secondly, having previously paid for them a fair price in money.

2. The General Assembly is bound to pass laws for the emancipation of slaves with the consent of their owners; and has full power to pass laws for their emancipation without their consent, by first paying for them; having power also to collect the necessary funds to pay for them, by general taxation on all things subject thereto, or by special taxation of slaves only.

3. The General Assembly has full power before the birth of those persons who by our constitution and laws can be held in slavery, so to modify existing laws as to allow them to remain as they are born—free.

4. It follows, that the General Assembly has full power so to modify existing laws, as to allow the condition of slavery to attach at birth to those who can be slaves, only in a qualified or limited manner; that is, to provide for the gradual prospective emancipation of the descendants of female slaves.”

It is due to candor to admit that one of the foregoing allegations of Mr. Wickliffe does contain, what is true in a certain sense. I have never indeed said nor thought that slaves are born free, in view of our laws; but only that the constitution did, and that the laws might recognise, that in the eyes of God and of reason, slavery was of human, not of divine origin; that it was a municipal, not a natural relation. But as he charges, I did venture to insinuate, that men are indeed born free. I have to confess, that even in those essays of 1830, I have allowed myself the great license of saying, “I think it clear that one unborn can in no sense be a slave; and such I do not doubt, is the doctrine of our constitution.” \* \* \* “The light of reason, history, and philosophy—the voice of nature and religion—the spirit of God himself, proclaims that the being he created in his own image, he must have created free.” (No. 5, *Hints on Slavery—Kentucky Reporter*, May 19, 1830.) In these unhappy opinions, it is true, I have the

sanction of an obscure man, of whom Mr. Wickliffe may possibly never have heard—named Thomas Jefferson—and of an instrument of no repute, which may have escaped his learned researches, called the Declaration of American Independence; and of that undistinguished mass of simple rebels, too insignificant to have attracted his attention, called the Continental Congress. But alas! such supports as these can avail but little to solace the heart of him, whose political opinions have failed to command the approving smiles of the illustrious “Duke of the Town Fork.”

This detail is indeed tedious, and the exposure which it involves is painful to me. But I have endured for ten years, every species of misrepresentation and abuse from this individual, and it is high time to arrest his career. I will therefore read two extracts more in regard to the affairs of 1830. On page 35, he speaks thus: “Mr. Breckinridge complains that the acts prohibiting the importation of slaves, then in force, need amendment, and demands the passage of a law that shall not only stop importation, but free the slaves at once,” &c. Again on page 36, “Mr. Breckinridge in 1830 taunts us by saying we look around and speak in whispers when we converse of negro slavery. But he told us the worst must be told. He told the worst, and in less than two years, more arson, rapes and murders were committed by slaves, than in twenty years preceding his telling the worst.” Fellow-citizens, I will put a strong restraint upon my feelings, and abstain from hurling back with indignant scorn, the foul and false accusations of this hoary slanderer. I flatly deny, and challenge him to prove, that the numbers of 1830, contain any such things as are here alleged, except only a complaint that the laws against the importation of slaves were violated with impunity. I deny, and challenge proof, that they contain any thing giving even a colorable pretext for such horrible accusations. I defy him to produce the least particle of proof, that any crime has been committed by any slave, at any time, or in any land, by reason of words uttered or printed, or by reason of principles asserted or insinuated by me, or by those who have held my general views on the subject under discussion; and in default of such proof, clear and positive proof, to warrant such charges, I invoke against him the condemnation of every honest man. Nay, so far I am from being guilty, and so far is he himself from being innocent, that none of you can have forgotten how, when in 1830, a most frightful outrage was committed by a negro slave, on the person of a white female in this county, (the only case of rape, of this horrid description, which occurred about that time, and therefore beyond doubt one of the cases alluded to by him,) this very man took money to screen that very culprit, whose crimes he now charges on me; he endeavored to blacken the character of a virtuous and orphan girl to save the wretch he defended from the gallows; he pledged his personal character for the innocence of a convict, whose indubitable guilt he now asserts as a means of heaping infamy on me; yea, he pursued throughout that dreadful affair such a course as to bring down on himself the general indignation of the people—basing his conduct all the while upon the ground that what he now asserts to be true, in order to ruin me, was then indubitably and outrageously false! Oh! shame, shame upon such a man! Human speech is inadequate to set him forth!



I am now done with the direct question of the difficulties of 1830; and I confidently appeal to all candid men for their judgment on those events. Whether my opinions were true or false, whether my conduct was wise or inconsiderate, nothing can be more clear than that Mr. Wickliffe has needlessly dragged me before the public and then shamefully misrepresented me. I will now proceed to the question in 1840.

So far as slavery was mixed up with the discussions of 1830, the question related to the *post nati*, and was essentially a question of organic power. In 1840 the question is changed; it is now one of high State policy, as it regards the importation and accumulation of slaves in the State. It is an attempt to change the settled policy of Kentucky; to separate her from the policy of the central slave States, and to fix her firmly to that of the Southern States; to cut her loose from Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee and Missouri, and make her a satellite of South Carolina; a faubourg of the lower Mississippi; to take, in short, a mighty step in advance against the white race, and in favor of eternal slavery. Now, as in 1830, the cry of agitation and abolition is raised. Then, it was determined by this cry, to force the slave interest beyond the power of the constitution itself; now, to enlarge it beyond the possibility of future control. In both cases, I have the honor of being singled out as one of those who must be destroyed, before the country can be undone; and in both cases Mr. Wickliffe presides over plans and opinions incompatible alike, with your glory and your prosperity.

The law of 1815, prohibiting the importation of slaves, was passed ten years before I was a member of the Legislature of Kentucky, and while I was yet a boy. It would seem impossible that I could be held responsible for it. The act of 1833 was passed five years after my retirement from the Legislature, and sometime after I had ceased to be a resident of the State. For this law also, it seems impossible to hold me responsible. And yet I believe no law was passed between 1815 and 1833 on the subject to which both of these relate; and I am confident none such passed while I was a member of the Legislature of the State. Still, as you will see, I am made responsible to the full extent of the whole subject; and in connexion with many of the best men of my generation, have been held up to popular indignation, and had brute force invoked against me.

I confess I have always desired to see slavery in Kentucky kept within manageable bounds; and therefore would have aided cordially in preventing the importation of slaves, by all proper means, allowed under the constitution. It is said by the enemies of the present law, that it is unconstitutional. I observe, however, that many of the ablest lawyers and statesmen of Kentucky voted for it; and it is known to have passed both houses, by unusual majorities (56 to 32 in the House of Representatives, and 23 to 12 in the Senate;) and that after the public mind had maturely considered the subject for several years. Let it be remembered, moreover, that if this objection has any weight, it is useless to agitate the country about the act, for in that case it is merely void and a dead letter; and surely the proper and constituted tribunals, the courts of justice, are far more suitable for the decision of that ques-

tion, than muster grounds and public meetings; and sworn, and incorruptible judges, better umpires in regard to it, than passionate demagogues rendered furious by defeat, or heated partizans stimulated by personal interests. I am not now a citizen of Kentucky; but I am deeply and personally interested in all that affects her prosperity; for I am myself a Fayette farmer, having in your midst the chief part of my worldly possessions. If added to this, my profound interest in her happiness and renown may entitle me to plead before her with the freedom of a son, and yet the hesitation of a stranger, I would implore you to sustain the decision you have already rendered, and not permit yourselves to be seduced or terrified into a repeal of this act. I utter these petitions in no spirit of faction; for all men know I am entirely withdrawn from party politics. Nor have I any reference to the gentlemen more directly opposed to each other in the late canvass; for the successful one (Mr. C. M. Clay,) with whom I agree in sentiment, and whose manliness must win every noble heart, is not known to me, even by eye-sight; and the other, (Mr. Robert Wickliffe, Jun.) is, by his mother, my kinsman, and has my best wishes that the uncommon advantages which he possesses and has enjoyed, may fit him for real greatness and true success. But I thus plead, because this law appears to me to embody a moral sentiment as well as a political principle of the very highest purity, truth and importance; because its continuance on the statute book will prevent Kentucky from being made a kind of entrepot for those execrable wretches, who carry on the domestic slave trade as a branch of public commerce; and because its influence, though silent and perhaps not considerable, yet throws the force of time, for the white and not for the black race, for liberty and not for slavery.

My business, however, is more immediately my own defence; and as I am distinctly and repeatedly charged by Mr. Wickliffe, with being one of the authors, if not the chief author of this act; and as the act itself is described by him as the very essence of abolitionism, it is necessary that I should set distinctly before you, in the first place, his accusations; and then, in dreadful contrast, the real facts of the case. If the result does not fill you with amazement, then I am a stranger to your character, and ignorant of the force of truth.

Speaking of this law of February 2, 1833, Mr. Wickliffe says: "And here I might defy *any lawyer or sensible man* living, to put his hand on his heart and say that the constitution is not *plainly, obviously and palpably violated*." (Speech, p. 9.) And yet *fifty-six* members of the House of Representatives and *twenty-three* members of the Senate, being sworn, voted for this act. And amongst these lawyers, who were no lawyers, and these men who had no sense, thus voting, were Judges Owsley, Clark, (afterwards Governor of the State,) Simpson, Green and Woolley; and *lawyers* Crittenden, Anderson, T. F. Marshall, John White, Southgate, Butler, Guthrie, Thompson, Thornton and Ewing!

On page 10 he says of this same law, "My crime, my constituents, has been, that I have discovered this *abolition trap*, and that I have, without waking up the cupidity of that portion of the profession that are always seen busiest and boldest when a negro is a party, or a grog-shop or a brothel is to be defended—attempted to spring its triggers and de-



prive those harpies of their booty." *Abolition, grog-shops and brothels*, sound curiously in connexion with the names I have just read. Again on page 11, he calls it "*this most iniquitous and inhuman law*." And lower down on the same page, he demands, "Sirs, do you expect that Carolina will ever make the Road (Charleston and Ohio Railroad,) while *this abolition tinder-box* disgraces your Statute Book?" Again on page 17, "Hear the *authors of the law*. [Here Mr. Wickliffe read from the Reporter, extracts from sundry publications made by the late J. Green, Esq. and the Rev. Robert J. Breckinridge, to show the origin and object of the law."] Again on page 18, he calls the law "*this abolition flag*." Again on page 19, he calls it "a statute on which your intestine enemies are aiding the British in the dreadful conflict she is bringing you into with your slaves." Again on page 21, he says, "*the bill was intended to be, and is an implement in the hands of the abolitionists*, to carry out their views in relation to our slave property; and their views I verily believe to be identical with, and *entirely regulated by* the British Cabinet." Again on page 23, "I have connected this act with abolition; I have connected it with the letters and plans of both Green and Breckinridge, as detailed in their numbers now before you; I have proved its unconstitutionality and shown that it is, in all its details, injurious to the whole State, but particularly oppressive to my constituents, and ruinous to the growth and prosperity of the city of Lexington; *I have sought, I have voted for its repeal*, and demand your approbation or condemnation of the act." Again on page 24, he says, "the bill" is "*both unjust and unconstitutional*." Again on page 25, "This law not only strikes at the root of the rights of masters, but at the very well being of our city." And a little lower down, "wipe from the statute book of the State this law that *not only injures but disgraces the State*." And on the same page he calls it "*a scourge and a curse to the country*." On the same page he says this law "degrades" the judge; on page 26, that it "*makes the attorney a very wretch*;" and on page 27, that "when the judge shall duly swear his attorney *into the service of the abolitionists*, and submit *their act* to the Grand Jury." Again on page 35, "I have not only shown you that *its object and effect* is emancipation, but the publications of both Mr. Green and Mr. Breckinridge, *the authors of the act*, nail the present agitators to the counter."

Such is a summary of Mr. Wickliffe's statements in regard to this act of 1833; and surely, if these are correct, the bill is most infamous, and I should richly deserve your contempt and abhorrence. The distinct charge of abolitionism I will notice separately, by and bye. The character of the bill itself, you will presently see, it is not necessary for me at least, to defend, however deeply others may be implicated in it. But I may be permitted to remark in the first place, that the relations long subsisting between Mr. Wickliffe and myself, would obviously suggest to an honorable mind, the propriety of peculiar caution in his statements concerning me; a propriety so fortified by my absence, and my profession, that lasting infamy should justly attach to him, if he knowingly or even recklessly violate truth, in such grave and dishonoring charges. I will take leave to remind you, in the second place, that Mr. Wickliffe was your Senator when this execrable

bill passed into a law; and that, by his own showing; the great importance of the subject, and his own immense and long standing debt of gratitude to you peculiarly required, what indeed his clear and ordinary duty enjoined, to-wit: That he should watch the progress of the bill, know its contents, and defeat it, if he could. According to his own judgment, rendered against the gentlemen returned this year for the county (*p. 26 of his Speech*), ignorance or neglect of duty are conclusive against a public servant; and therefore what he says to excuse himself, by reason of absence, inattention, hurrying bills through, end of the session, &c. &c., would constitute no defence, if it were even true; which, unhappily, the Journals of the Senate prove it is not.

But I will not dally with your patience, nor with the subject. The proof against this public accuser is clear, precise, positive and overwhelming. He was your Senator (*Senate Journal*, 1832, p. 3.) He was chairman of the committee of Courts of Justice (p. 10;) the very committee to which this bill and subject naturally belonged.

On the thirty-first day of the session, William Owsley, late Judge of the Court of Appeals of Kentucky, and as pure a patriot as the commonwealth contains, and then a member of the Senate, and in the absence of Mr. Wickliffe, chairman of the committee of Courts of Justice—moved for and obtained leave to bring in "*A Bill to amend the law, prohibiting the importation of slaves into this State*;" Mr. Wickliffe himself being present, as the Journal shows, at the same session, both before and after the leave was given, and doubtless at the moment, (p. 172, 3 and 4.) This leave was referred to Owsley, Thornton and Guthrie, the three oldest lawyers perhaps in the Senate, the worst of them a better and wiser man than Mr. Wickliffe, and all members of the committee of Courts of Justice, (p. 10 and p. 173.) Four days after this Judge Owsley reported the bill, which was read the first time and ordered to be read the second time; Mr. Wickliffe, as the Journal shows, being present at the same session, both immediately before and immediately after this vote was taken, and therefore, by the most violent presumption at the very time—(p. 205 & 6.) Four days more elapsed, and the bill was read the second time, and referred to a committee of the whole House—Mr. Wickliffe being present—(p. 231.) Three days afterwards the Senate took up this bill in committee of the whole, acted on it, had it referred back, took the *yeas and nays*, first on an amendment, and then on the third reading of the bill; when it was ordered to be engrossed by 24 to 7. Mr. Wickliffe seems to have been absent from this session—(pp. 225 & 6.) The day after this, viz: on the 15th January, 1833, the bill *was passed* by a vote of 23 to 12; and the *yeas and nays* being called, Mr. Wickliffe was present, and—my countrymen, how shall I say it?—how can you believe it?—Mr. Wickliffe was present, and—oh, baseness!—VOTED FOR THE BILL!!!—(p. 366.)

In an honorable mind, death is preferable to disgrace. Oh! my countrymen, what could language utter, that to a heart not callous to shame, could add to the sting, which these naked facts ought to inflict? Here is this man, when sworn and bound by the highest obligations, deliberately performing the most solemn official acts; and then, when in the lapse of years his opinions change or his acts are forgotten—in the



popular assemblies and by the press, denying, blackening these acts—that by a remote chain of causes, he may fasten them on the dead, the innocent, and the absent, and thereby ruin them! Here is this man, shut up to this alternative, that if he served you faithfully in 1833, he is now by his own showing a fanatic, an agitator, and a slanderer; or if he is to be credited now, he was then every vile and wicked thing which he has labored so thoroughly to his own undoing, that he might fasten on me! Oh! how just and how terrible is God! How sacred, how retributive is his glorious providence!

I will now pass to the general question of Abolition; which, it is the principal object of the speech, as of all the present efforts of this individual, to fix upon all who stood in his way, and upon all whom, from motives of private interest or personal hate, he desires to make odious. For you must observe that while he denounces *his dead friend*, Judge Green, and myself by name, his direct charges reach every man who may have voted for, or who may now support, the particular measure he may at any time attack; and his insinuations extend to all who may favor any principle or plan upon the whole subject, that comes short of approving slavery as abstractly good, of giving eternal fixedness to its existence, and of increasing illimitably its extent.

On the 17th page of the speech he thus discourses: “But gentlemen say they are no abolitionists—they are indignant at the charge. But what is an abolitionist? One who intends to abolish negro slavery by an immediate or a slow process, by a direct attack upon the tenure of slavery, or by an indirect mode.” Now this definition is so radically vicious, that it contains in itself, the very proof and measure of its own absurdities; for *immediate* emancipation is the mother principle of abolition, while gradual and remote results are its very bane; denial of all title and tenure in slaves, is its watchword, while *indirect modes* are the objects of its scorn. But this definition, expounded by other portions of this speech, is as insidious as it is absurd. They who are abolitionists are to be put down by violence; to be considered as public enemies; treated as conspirators against the peace and safety of your families; hunted down as the instigators of arson, rape and murder. Now we learn who these horrible wretches and conspirators are. Now we understand, that whoever *intends* that a day shall ever come in the distant future, when true, real and general freedom shall dwell amongst the children of men and cover the earth with peace and blessedness—that man is a traitor. Now we comprehend, that whoever has in purpose, that laws most wise and needful in other respects, or a policy most beneficent on general grounds; whoever *even intends* that such laws and such a policy shall *even indirectly* operate the most remote restraint upon ‘*negro slavery*,’ anywhere or under any circumstances, or throw the slightest contingent influence against ‘*the tenure of slavery*’—that man is also a traitor. Here is our warrant in the definition of this tried statesman; here the exhortation to action in his impassioned harangue; here the victims pointed out, with slow and steady accuracy. It only remains to strike the blow. Let that blow fall first as is most meet on the worthiest head. *Ashland* is in sight; its illustrious occupant may be standing in your midst, more striking in his grave simplicity, the first citizen of

the republic, than he could have been; clothed with the ensigns of its magistracy. Behold the example of his life devoted to liberty; listen to the long, unaltered, unwavering testimony of his principles, constant for freedom; hear his voice, unterrified and unseduced, on the most memorable occasion, and in the most august of all assemblies—“*God, who knows my heart, knows that I love liberty and desire the freedom of the human race; but I desire the freedom of my own country above all other countries, that of my own race before all other races.*” Now rush upon him; now crush him; we who partake of his principles, will not shrink from his doom. I, for one, desire to live no longer, than while I may possess such principles; nor do I care to die more gloriously than in testimony to their truth.

But I will suppose for the present, that this definition is true and just; and I undertake to prove by it, that my accuser is more obnoxious to the charge of abolition than I am. I am fully aware, that his universal mode of enforcing every subject by whatever arguments or assertions may seem to favor his particular object, without any regard to their truth or soundness, leads him into the dilemma of perpetual self-contradiction. But it gives him also this advantage, that on every subject of which he treats, he has opposite statements and principles under which he takes refuge, as necessity requires. At one of our Indian treaties, that of Tellico, if my memory is correct, that fine old soldier, the late Governor Shelby, had waited several days for a noted chief who promised to attend the treaty; when becoming impatient at the delay, he demands of another chief, if he knew the cause of his absence. “No,” replied the wise and upright savage; “but I know he can’t come here; *for he who has two tongues, can talk to but one man at a time.*” So he who has two tongues, should never talk on more than one subject at a time, nor upon the same subject more than once; if he does otherwise, he must take the responsibility of his double tongue, and reconcile his talk as he best may.

In Mr. Wickliffe’s famous circular of 1830, which I have already mentioned as the original cause of all the agitations of that period, he thus expresses himself: “I am here asked, do you wish to render slavery perpetual? I answer *No!*” Well, my friends, I also answer ‘*No!*’ and here at least our principles agree.

Again in the same document, he thus discourses: “Providence will no doubt in time point out the means of effecting the liberation of the slaves.” I also cordially embrace this opinion; and here again he is at least as obnoxious as myself, to his own defamation.

Still farther, he adds the following solemn pledge: “I will therefore, at all times aid in whatever will tend to effect the emancipation of the whole slave population gradually.” But in the name of common sense, does not his definition of 1840 brand his pledge of 1830 as ultra-abolitionism? The more particularly, when you remember that the pledge was expressly made for all the slave States; for he says in the sentence immediately preceding the words quoted, of every and any “means of effecting the liberation of the slaves,” that “to be effectual, it must be general in all the States.” Now this pledge goes far beyond any thing I have ever bound myself to; indeed, far beyond my constitutional principles, and proves him a far more unscrupulous abo-



litionist than I. For I have considered the subject one of such delicacy and difficulty, that I have been cautious of pledges—select as to means—hostile to many things “*that will tend to effect the emancipation*” of slaves. Nay, more; I am thoroughly persuaded that we have no right to interfere in the proposed manner, “in all the States;” that the peace and dignity of States forbid such interference, and that a very large part of the evils of modern abolitionism flow from a mode of procedure in perfect accordance with this extraordinary pledge, and in such direct hostility to all my own principles and views, that I will pledge myself to resist it forever and to the uttermost.

If you look now to the 16th page of the speech to which I am replying, you find these words: “I have many slaves, *and have liberated many*, because they were good slaves,” &c. It is true, he makes a confession of his great error in having done this mad act, and says it was amongst “*the errors of earlier life*.” Mr. Wickliffe and I differ a little here. He had *many* slaves, I *few*; he counting by hundreds, I hardly by scores. He liberated *many*—all I suppose that were *good*, as that is the motive assigned; I only a *few*, but as all I had were good enough to be free, I had as good a reason as he. He regrets what he did; I did nothing hastily, and therefore have no reason to repent of what I have done. In sober seriousness, he seems to have committed the capital fact in the case, and to have been caught in the very manner!

But he has not done himself full justice. They who will take the trouble to examine the records in the office of the Clerk of the County, will find this gentleman bound by deed of record, under his seal and sign manual, to a third party; securing in the most full and ample manner the power in others to emancipate his own slaves (how many I know not,) and divesting himself of all power to prevent it. I do not condemn this act; I regret the necessity of referring to it; since at least one person, whom I reverence and love, is connected with it, and that in a manner worthy of the highest praise. But it goes far beyond any act of mine, in fastening the charge of abolitionism, under our present definition.

I do beseech you to consider this summary. Here is a man defining an abolitionist to be “*one who intends to abolish slavery*,” or to “*attack the tenure of slavery*” in any way whatever, or to the slightest degree; and who villifies all who are involved in the wide compass of such terms. And yet the same man appears at your bar, declaring himself opposed to perpetual slavery, asserting his conviction that God also is opposed to it; pledging himself to aid, *at all times, in all things, that will even tend* to emancipate the whole slave population of the nation, so that it be done gradually; himself absolutely a practical emancipator of “*many slaves*,” and bound by a deed signed when he was above fifty years of age (in the year 1827,) to emancipate—no one knows how many more! How immense is the benefit of having no memory, and two tongues!

There is, however, my countrymen, as you all, I presume, know, another kind of thing widely different from that I have been considering, which passes under the generic term *abolition*. This term has become technical, and has a meaning as fixed and definite as the terms *man, whig, democrat*, or any other that defines a race, or a class. And

it is as unfair for this accuser of mankind, to use this term in an equivocal and general sense, that he may hold up all men who are not as much in love with slavery as he *now* is—as the followers of Garrison, Thompson, Birney and the like, as it would be ridiculous for him to describe an animal with seven heads and ten horns, and then say he meant man. As to this *real* abolitionism, this modern monster that has so agitated the world for the last few years, all who know anything of my life, opinions and labors, know that I have been from the origin of this sect, steadily and uninterruptedly, amongst the most open and decided of its opponents. It is no doubt true, that heated and ignorant men, who do not discriminate or who will not examine, may have confounded my general devotion to the liberties of mankind, and my particular labors for this unfortunate black race, with the dogmas and plans of modern abolition. It is also undeniable, that while the abolitionists themselves have constantly accused me of holding pro-slavery opinions and advocating pro-slavery interests, the bitterness of personal and sectarian enmity has made itself manifest, during long and excited ecclesiastical difficulties, in charges of modern abolitionism, levelled at my head. But these wanton, absurd and contradictory accusations have seemed more worthy of pity or scorn, than of any regular defence. For above twenty years, my opinions have undergone no change on the great questions touching slavery and the black race generally. Those opinions have been freely, constantly uttered, when the occasion required it; thousands and tens of thousands in both hemispheres have heard and read them; they are just as notorious as my own existence, just as distinct and defined as my name or person.

This true, real and odious abolitionism; this thing which, notwithstanding his definition, Mr. Wickliffe constantly means and perpetually labors to fasten on his intended victims, I will now briefly and clearly explain; and show you, past doubt, that here also, and in the worst sense of the worst possible abolitionism, my accuser is more obnoxious than I am, to his own charges!

The abolitionism of Garrison, Thompson, Birney and the like, asserts as its fundamental truth, the absolute and universal sinfulness of slavery, and the consequent duty of universal, *immediate* emancipation. I utterly deny, and have constantly combatted this proposition. I presume Mr. Wickliffe also rejects it. Here then we stand on common ground.

The second great, general foundation of modern abolitionism, is the claim of all political and civil rights and privileges for the blacks in the countries where they dwell; and a most violent enmity to all schemes for the removal of any of them, by colonization or otherwise. Against all this, I have written, spoken, printed and acted from the moment that party was organized. Against a *part* of it, I doubt not Mr. Wickliffe is also clear; and to that extent we agree again. But he is a *cold*, and I a very *warm*, friend of African colonization; he would prevent and I would encourage the emigration of the black race from Kentucky; and to the whole extent of this difference, he is with and I against Garrison, Thompson, Birney and abolition.

The third principle of modern abolitionism, which, united with the two foregoing, makes up the elemental form of the heresy, is the doctrine of *amalgamation*. Against this horrid doctrine, I have fought



Without intermission. For it, Mr. Wickliffe is deliberately and fully committed. In 1830, I say of amalgamation, that it is "*a base, spurious, degraded mixture, hardly less revolting*" than revolution, or the extermination of the slaves. (See Number 7, *Hints on Slavery*—Kentucky Reporter, June 9, 1830.) At the same period Mr. Wickliffe proposes to abolish slavery by a mode, which will, "*in time, efface the distinctive mark of color, until the chain of slavery is worn out and broken by sudden and convulsive measures.*" (See *Circular, signed R. Wickliffe*—Kentucky Reporter, February 17, 1830. See also, his speech, page 19, near the bottom, where the same doctrine is squinted at.) Now there are but three possible modes by which to "*efface the distinctive marks of color.*" The *first* is, by the blacks getting white; which is, I apprehend, not very likely to happen, and is, moreover, contrary to Mr. Wickliffe's definition, which is strenuous only for "*negro slavery.*" The *second* mode is, that the whites should turn negroes; and in that case, perhaps, slaves to boot; a consummation which, I humbly trust, God will forever avert. The *third* and only remaining mode that is possible, is, that whites and blacks should all become mulattoes, which is the necessary result of amalgamation; and the grand climax proposed by Mr. Wickliffe, as the end of all his labors and plans, the result of all his philosophy and statesmanship! Truly a most notable scheme! and singularly comforting to a race of white freemen!

For my part, I go for the white man, without a cross. I go against Mr. Wickliffe and against the abolitionists; and boldly assert, that, however hostile he or they may be on certain points, they are far more harmonious in their general principles and schemes, than either party is with me. They who will read the speech I am combatting, with the knowledge of these facts fresh in their minds, will perceive at once the secret bond of sympathy, and the true source of Mr. Wickliffe's repeated and exalted praises of Mr. James G. Birney, the abolition candidate for the Presidency of the United States, who was reviling his country in England, while his eulogist was proclaiming his virtues to you!

The most extraordinary part, perhaps, of all this unparalleled speech of Mr. Wickliffe, is that in which he endeavors to convince you that I have been acting under an English influence and conspiring with the crown, ministry and people of Britain, to compass the disgrace and ruin of my country. It is difficult to decide whether charges of this kind exhibit more strikingly the ignorance or malignity of him who makes them. The slightest general knowledge of my life and opinions, is proof incontrovertible, that I have been educated in principles the most irreconcilable to all powers of government that are not absolutely popular and free; that I have ardently and constantly pressed upon my countrymen opinions touching the glory, the independence, the nationality and the renown of our mighty republic, which might be liable to the accusation of being extreme, but never to that of being servile; and that, as it regards any foreign influence, England has been the very last of all, with which I, or any with whom I have acted, either in politics or religion, would have conspired for our own and our country's infamy. Descended from ancestors who were driven out by English intolerance; partaking the most ardent whig blood of the revolution; born of one of the leaders of the democratic party of 1798; imbued from earliest childhood with every

principle of republican liberty; trained in a religious faith persecuted by England, and now a minister of a church that has suffered more from her than from all quarters besides—I find myself publicly accused of holding principles and pursuing objects identical with those of the British crown, and of doing all this under and by virtue of British influence! Such accusations, springing from an ignorance so impassive as not to be sensible that it is exposing itself to the pity and scorn of all enlightened men, or from a malignity so blind, as to disregard even that appearance of truth, which public decency requires—would, under ordinary circumstances, need no reply. But connected with the existing question of negro slavery, and made in a formal manner, by a responsible accuser in print, on an important occasion, and in connexion with transactions of great local interest, it has appeared to me proper, that they should not be passed over. And, thanks to the goodness of that overruling Providence, the doctrine of whose special intervention this gentleman is not ashamed, though professing christianity, publicly to deride—I am able to meet them, so far as they are specific, with an overwhelming refutation, in the naked facts of the case.

In the year 1836 I found myself in England, a delegate from the church to which I belong, not to the Kirk of Scotland, as this individual asserts, but to the *Congregational Union* of England and Wales, on a mission having no other object but to promote christian fellowship and mutual good will amongst the people of God, and greater general interest in the conversion of the world. Whatever may have been the apparently well grounded hopes of doing good, by such an exchange of delegates, between the churches of the old world and those of the new—exchanges long resorted to by most of the christian denominations, and still retained by many of them—my own opinion, formed on careful examination, was finally settled against the practice, under existing circumstances; and on my return to America, I strongly advised its discontinuance, and the General Assembly of my church concurred in judgment with me, and formally broke up the plan, in the year 1838.

I found on my arrival in England, a state of great excitement in the public mind on the general subject of negro slavery; an excitement which extended to slavery in America, and had become a matter of great and constant annoyance to every American in England, who did not hold the opinions and partake of the passions of that party in America, headed by Garrison, Birney, Tappan, and such men. George Thompson had been to the United States, and had then recently returned to England. At the moment I arrived in that country, he was engaged in a public outcry against Drs. Reed, Matheson, Cox and Hoie, the two former Congregationalists, the two latter Baptists; who, having come as delegates from their respective denominations in England to some of the churches of this country, and returned home not thorough-bred abolitionists—were publicly and vehemently attacked by George Thompson, for countenancing, as he said, slavery in America.

I landed in England on the 21st day of April, 1836, and in less than sixty days, I was engaged in a public debate with this same George Thompson, in defence of my home, my brethren and my countrymen. On the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th days of June, 1836, in the very spot where that accuser had been accustomed to rave at will, or to triumph



easily over all opposition—as now, this day, on the very theatre where this accuser has too long reviled good men with impunity—I met him in the fortress of his strength, and hurled back upon him, as I hurl back this day, his sophistry and malice; and stripped him, as I have done his fellow, this day, of every pretext of humanity, patriotism, and truth. And yet, fellow-citizens, the battle of that day was a very different affair from this. It is one thing to stand in health and strength and fervent conviction of conscious truth and rectitude, in the midst of the playmates of childhood, and the tried friends of life; and it is quite another thing to face a whole nation, prejudiced against your cause; to have in that cause itself the necessity to make distinctions, exceptions and reserves; to be weak in body and bound down under sufferings. I call God to witness, that if ever I did an act of intrepid nationality, or stout-hearted devotion to my country and my friends, that was the act. And it was an act left in no uncertain record, that men might err concerning it. I hold in my hand one copy of three large British impressions of that Glasgow debate; and I know that tens of thousands of copies of it have been circulated throughout the United States; several thousands, through the newspapers of this very State. I also hold in my hand, a printed copy of my letter to Dr. Wardlaw, of Glasgow, who presided on the occasion of that debate, written from Paris, in France, in consequence of certain acts of his in regard to the discussion; a letter, which the present occasion justifies me in remembering, was received with enthusiasm by the whole American people, and distributed by hundreds of thousands through the whole American press. Proof and explanation of acts like these, beyond the mere recital of the facts, must be not only superfluous, but would be the height of affectation.

But, rejoins Mr. Wickliffe, there are more recent facts. There are, my friends; and they are conclusive for me, and against him. The “*World’s Anti-Slavery Convention*,” as it is most ridiculously called—a convention of about three hundred Englishmen, some half dozen Frenchmen, and a score or two of Americans, of no repute, did indeed meet in London, a few months ago, and “play fantastic tricks before high heaven.” But my relation to the convention was simply this: that I was denounced in its open sessions, in such terms of unmeasured bitterness and contumely, as Englishmen alone know how to use; and that abuse carefully re-printed in all the abolition journals of the United States. Nay, after the convention had adjourned, Garrison and Thompson met in Glasgow, on my old battle ground; and gallant and manly as Mr. Wickliffe himself, and just a fortnight before his own attack upon me, in this court-house, they poured out the phials of their wrath upon me there, while he was distilling his venom here: and to make the scene complete, my old correspondent, Dr. Wardlaw, presided on the occasion, and broke a four year’s silence, after my letter of 1836, by a volley of false, personal accusation. I hold in my hand *The Glasgow Chronicle*, of July 29, 1840, giving an account of the meeting, and establishing the facts I have stated. I also hold in my hand, *The London Patriot*, of July 28th, 1840, containing a full account of a great meeting in the Town Hall at Birmingham, England, on the 24th of July last; at which, Mr. Wickliffe’s particular friend, the abolition candidate for the Presidency, whom he so pointedly eulogises, and of whom he says “*I have ever felt indignant at the re-*

*proaches cast upon Birney*,” (Speech, p. 22;)—at this meeting, I say, this “*honest man and pious christian*,” regaled and delighted some two or three thousand Englishmen with a recital of the weaknesses, follies and crimes of his country, and of the faithlessness and hypocrisy of her churches! I observe that the Methodist and Presbyterian communions come in for a very liberal share of his malevolence; and this perhaps may be one cause of the tender interest which Mr. Wickliffe feels in him, as you will more clearly perceive, by and bye. But whatever may be the ground of this curious attachment of the disciple of Mr. Calhoun to the disciple of Mr. Garrison, of the eternal pro-slavery man, to the immediate abolitionist, I crave your peculiar attention to the remarkable fact, that Birney the abolitionist, traducing his country, is taken into the bosom of this patriot pro-slavery man; while I, defending my country and denouncing abolitionism, am marked out as a public enemy, worthy only of the tender mercies of Judge Lynch! But after all, it is not to be marvelled at, that he who lives absolutely for himself, should abhor the silent but living rebuke of their conduct, who try to live for their country and their generation. And for my part, I prefer the glory even of a failure, in the course I have marked out and tried to pursue, to the most perfect success in raking together slaves and land titles; in obstructing the permanent improvement of the country by selfish contests for right of way for my slaves; in vexatious attempts to have them clad by the public by pleading the statute of limitations, and in projects to turn my neighbors out of doors on pretended titles and legal quibbles.

But Mr. Wickliffe has extended this allegation of English influence so far as apparently to intend to cover every man and every enterprise not perfectly according with his own views on the subject of negro slavery; views which are as novel as they are extreme, and which ever were, and I trust in God never will be, embraced by the body of one people in the slave-holding States. He has gone so far as to make an open attack as the basis of this alleged foreign influence, on certain branches of the churches of Jesus Christ; and especially on the Presbyterian people of this country. In the array of his most “unerring proofs,” as he is pleased to call his insensate tirades, he speaks as follows: “Her (viz. England’s) first emissaries in America, in furtherance of *his* plan, *came through the church of Scotland, recommended to the churches the same faith in America*. These emissaries sowed the seeds of abolitionism in that church, which took such root that the church itself has been rent in twain by it. Many of the General Assembly of that church are believed at first to have become infected greatly with the plans of universal emancipation, and Kentucky was selected as the slave State where operations should begin. Shortly before or about the time of Mr. Green’s effort to pass the bill under consideration, the Synod of Danville, as the prints of the times will show, *had under consideration* certain resolutions declaring the evils of slavery and strongly recommending the ultimate abolition of it in Kentucky, especially among the whole body of Presbyterians.” (Speech, p. 20.) On the preceding page, he had named particularly these “*first emissaries to America*,” saying “*She (England) has sent her Thompsons to the North, and her Martineaus to the South*.”

Before remarking on these statements, it is necessary to rectify a little, both their chronology and their history. The authors of the bill, if Mr.



Wickliffe is to be credited, had laid their plans and even done their mischief as early as the year 1830; nay, in connexion with one portion of the remarks quoted above, their author says: "I speak from a period of *more than twelve year's memory*." But it is notorious to all, who draw their facts from their memory and not from their imagination, that Thompson came to the United States about the beginning of the year 1835; and that the visit of Miss Martineau to this country was subsequent to that of Mr. Thompson. Yet these were the "*first emissaries*," and the mischief was already done above five years! "The Greek of all this," to use one of Mr. Wickliffe's classical phrases, is as follows: When Judge Green and myself are to be held responsible for the act of 1833, it is necessary to refer that act to an influence preceding its passage, and connected with us; and in this state of the argument, our doings in 1830 are declared to have caused the passage of the law three years after. But when it becomes necessary in another stage of the argument, to connect us and the act, with an English influence, then Thompson and Martineau, in 1835 and 1837, became the infectors of Green and myself, and induced us to do, what we had finished from five to seven years before, and through us oblige the Legislature of Kentucky to pass a bill that had already been a law for three or four years! Capital logic!

The *history* of Mr. Wickliffe is even more imperfect than his *chronology*. These "*first emissaries to America*," says he, "*came through the church of Scotland*," and they came to the Presbyterians. Each of these assertions separately and unitedly, are jointly and severally untrue. Miss Martineau is an Arian or Unitarian; Mr. Thompson, if a member of any church, is an Independent; neither of them ever came on any mission to the Presbyterian church; neither of them has any connexion with the church of Scotland; the church of Scotland never sent any delegate at any time to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in the United States, nor the latter to the former; nor was the church of Scotland & the Presbyterian church of the United States, at any time liable to the charge of forming or attempting any plan to favor abolitionism, such as that held by Miss Martineau and Mr. Thompson. I distinctly assert these facts, as notorious and incontrovertible; and I defy this reviler of God's people to gainsay one of them. I do indeed understand that this gentleman, who is far more learned in land-law than in ecclesiastical history, attempts to sustain his allegation in one point, by saying that in England, all who are not of the established Episcopal church, are called members of the church of Scotland; and the inference is, that Thompson the Independent, and Martineau the Unitarian, may therefore be truly said to be sent on a mission from the established Presbyterian church of Scotland, & the orthodox Presbyterian body of the United States! Most admirable logic, learning and truth!

He speaks of the schism of the Presbyterian church in the United States; and if the argument is of any avail to his present purpose, the facts, as usual, ought to be the very opposite of what they are, in some important respects. It is true, a schism has occurred in the Presbyterian church—unhappy in its character, and deeply to be deplored in the necessity which produced it. It is also true, that while that schism was produced by difference in important and fundamental points of doctrine and polity, yet the question of abolitionism was so far mixed with it, that

nearly the entire mass of abolitionists that had found their way into that church, sloughed off with the schism itself. Now, to make Mr. Wickliffe's statements of the case and use of the facts appropriate to his charges against me and my church, it ought to be true, that I acted for and with that portion that was abolitionist; that the Synod of Kentucky was of that party and portion; and that the General Assembly was left in their hands. But all the facts are precisely the other way; and I am accused by the abolitionists of having been the chief agent in dividing my church, on account of my alleged pro-slavery preferences; and also accused by Mr. Wickliffe of having divided it by my abolitionism! The truth is, that the whole history of this unhappy schism and of my connexion with it, furnishes the clearest possible refutation of Mr. Wickliffe's accusations against me and my brethren; offers the best guaranty to the whole nation of the principles and spirit of the church, and challenges the admiration of mankind, to those venerable institutions around which the rampant spirit of modern fanaticism raved in vain, and before which it received its first signal overthrow.

In this attack on the Presbyterian neighbors and constituents of Mr. Wickliffe, which I have every reason to believe was far more violent in the spoken than in the printed speech, there are peculiar circumstances of insult and aggravation. One, for example, is, that of all the political friends of this individual, none, to the extent of their numbers and whenever their principles would permit them, have been more constant, more efficient—may I not almost say less disposed to be scrupulous, than these very persons whom he has now singled for destruction? Another is, that in the very canvass, in which the failure of his son, (a failure which is attributable, I presume, almost entirely to the father's imprudent interference and violent counsels,) has produced all the extraordinary scenes which have followed; these very Presbyterians, with cordial and remarkable unanimity supported that son! A third and characteristic one is, that other christian denominations, as the Methodists, for example, which were united with us in the *spoken* denunciation, are entirely omitted from the *printed* speech: a piece of unmanly cunning, unworthy of any good cause, and equally insulting to those it would spare, as to those it would destroy.

But the grand objection to this procedure of Mr. Wickliffe lies to the thing itself. Supposing that his general facts had been true, and not false; supposing that his inferences had been just, and not unfounded; supposing that he had himself, not been a member of another church and therefore bound to condemn with the more caution, and supposing that church had not been one that has too often and too ardently persecuted us, when it had the power; supposing this Presbyterian church—a church unpolluted for three hundred years, except by its own blood—had been less remarkably the friend of order, of knowledge and of the general advancement of society, and therefore less obviously not liable to be the butt of his extraordinary ignorance;—still, the procedure itself is most dangerous to liberty, and utterly intolerable in a free State. The whole proceedings of the Presbyterian church are public and open to all mankind; and all her authority, which is purely moral, is restrained, without exception, to those who voluntarily and by preference enter into her communion; and society has, in these two facts, a certain and enduring guar-



anty. But it is going a long step beyond the wholesome control of public sentiment, for political demagogues to discuss the churches on the hustings for party purposes, and revile the people of God for their faith and practice, as a solace for their own disappointed ambition. The right to worship God is the most precious of all rights; the privilege of belief, and of an innocent life, answering to that belief, is the very first of all privileges. Or if these sacred liberties can be questioned at all, the constitution of the country, the spirit of all our institutions, the peace of society, and the highest policy of the State, demand that this audacious inquisition shall not pollute the purity of our popular elections, nor be instituted in the primary assemblies of the people. Let this example be but faithfully followed out, and the religious liberties of the country are at an end, and with them all other freedom. Let the mob loose first on Presbyterians, and the suppressed Methodists will follow next; and then in succession all whose right to hold any opinion on any subject, shall be considered by Mr. Wickliffe incompatible with his right to hold his slaves; or by any other equally enlightened and candid patriot, incompatible with his pretensions on any other subject. I warn you of your danger; I denounce this unprecedented outrage; I call upon every sober minded man, of all shades of opinion, to set his face against this beginning of evils, the end of which no man can foresee. For, take my word for it, such attempts will be resisted with unflinching courage; and they who may triumph by the violence here recommended, will learn at last, how unfounded were their conjectures, that the people do not understand or will not vindicate their rights.

There is a personal question of no great importance, which, however, I do not feel authorised to omit entirely, to which I ask your attention for a single moment. I had said in my little note of the 7th inst., calling this meeting, that I had come unexpectedly to Kentucky, or, as I there expressed it, that I had, "in the providence of God," visited this "my native region." In replying to this, Mr. Wickliffe in his published address of the 10th inst. has allowed himself to ridicule the notion that God's providence superintended my conduct, and to deny the fact intended to be asserted. From a column and more of very offensive remarks, I select a few sentences: "Talk as he may of his being here by the providence of God and his seeking advice (*guidance*, not advice, was the word I used,) from above, he has come here for the very business he is enacting. He learnt that his Negro Bill had driven me from the Senate; that a new election is pending, and lo! he is here as quick as the stages will bring him, and commences a war upon me—all by the advice and providence of God, of course." There is much more of the same character. Now, fellow-citizens, I am not aware that I should be to blame if the thing were just as he states it; but unfortunately, all he says is untrue, and I defy him to prove one particle of it. My being here is purely providential, or if he pleases, accidental; and all the benefits he will take from this discussion, are his, without any procurement of mine. I had an appointment to deliver a discourse before the literary societies of Jefferson College, near Pittsburgh, in Pa., on the 24th of last month; an appointment which I was prevented from fulfilling a year ago, by domestic afflictions, and which was renewed this year at great personal inconvenience, on account of the kind and partial importunity of the young

gentlemen of the College. After agreeing to come so far on the way towards Kentucky, the manager of my estate in this country, a man well known to many of you, and whom, having known from his youth and long employed, I may safely call an honest man and my friend—informed me that my affairs required my particular examination and advice; which he sought, and in reply received for answer, that under all the circumstances I would immediately visit the West. I care not to confess to you my friends, that the ties of filial gratitude to an aged parent dwelling amongst you; that the graves of my kindred; that the honors which have been conferred on me here; that the friends I love, and the objects I have cherished—all, all fill my heart and my eyes, at the remembrance of my country, and make me perhaps too ready to revisit it. Alas! that at each return I should find the number of those most ready to forgive this, perhaps unmanly tenderness, more and more reduced not only by the stroke of death, but by the operation of those causes whose force Mr. Wickliffe is striving so madly to augment. I ought also to say, that my having in my possession at the present moment, books and papers which belong so directly to this discussion, and whose presence will, I fear, increase Mr. Wickliffe's hatred of the doctrine of a special providence, needs but a word. For the last six years I have been connected with the periodical press of the country, and with a monthly journal, which, if Mr. Wickliffe had read, he would certainly have had more knowledge and perhaps better principles. Deeming it my duty to prepare an article for the pages, of my own work, in reply to the accusations of the 'World's Convention' people in England, and upon the general subject of that meeting, but not having leisure to do it before leaving Baltimore, I threw the material for it into my trunk, and found when I got here, what I have often found before, that the opposite extremes of opinion not only resemble each other far more than is generally supposed, but are often beaten down by the very same weapons.

And now, my countrymen, this painful but imperative duty is performed. I thank you for your kind and patient hearing, and leave my cause with confidence in your hands. I had no thought of being called before you again after so long an interval; and it is, if possible, still less likely that I shall ever again take part in one of your popular assemblies. If God had so willed, it had been my happiness to have lived and labored amongst you; to have mingled my dust with yours, and to have cast the lot of my children in the same heritage with yours. Wherever I live or wherever I die, I shall live and die a true Kentuckian. With me, the first of all appellations is *christian*, after that *gentleman*, and then *Kentuckian*! The foundations of society in this unparalleled region, were laid by hands dear to me, as they can be to you; and throughout the whole history of the commonwealth, there is not one scene of glory, one monument of success, one proof of advancement, one evidence of greatness, one day of trial, with which my kindred and my friends have not been associated; so that your fame is precious to my heart, as the warm currents that gush through it. The fields of battle where our fathers have fought, I know them all. Every green hillock over which your flocks graze, dwells in my memory, and the running streams along which your noble boys stray, are clear and fresh in my imagination and my heart, as when my youthful feet traversed them, when your land was

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almost a wilderness. And am I the man to conspire against a land and a people like this? Are you the judges, who are expected to convict me? No, my friends, no. Not a blade of grass on your luxuriant fields, shall wither forever, if it stands till some act of mine brings danger or shame nigh to your habitations. No, my friends, no. May God bless you and yours, with his richest benedictions to the thousandth generation; yea, may he forgive, even those who have sought to do me this great damage, of robbing me of your good will. Yea, even him, whom, in the defence of my character, my principles and my hopes, I have been obliged to consider—nay, have been obliged—contemning his threats and trampling his accusations under my feet—to prove a faithless public servant and a dishonored gentleman; even him, slanderer as he is, may God forgive, as I freely do, this day.

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 BRECKINRIDGE, R. J.  
 Speech of Robert J.  
 Breckinridge, Deliv-  
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